



Opener - May 2nd

April 2009

Editor: Tom Raschke (traschke@globaldialog.com) or 608-233-6765

Club Web site: <http://www.yaharafishingclub.org/>

River Fishing Roundtable

Notes by Stan Nichols

Gary Engberg, Wally Banfi, and Terry Frey, members of the Four Lakes Guides Association, tournament anglers, outdoor writers and educators, and long time supporters of the Yahara Fishing Club gave a roundtable discussion on river fishing at the March meeting. The discussion started out with Clay Russell asking questions of the presenters but the answers often wandered so I will try to summarize the commonalities of responses. Originally the plan was to compare river fishing with lake fishing, but the lakes most commonly discussed were Lake Wisconsin and pools of the Mississippi River, which are parts of a river system.



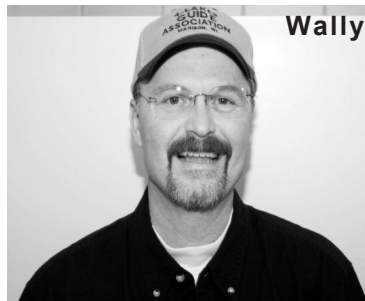
Gary

The first question discussed where to find fish at different water levels. In high water the fish generally move toward shore. In low water they head for the deeper river channels. Rising water in the spring usually means better fishing. Fish can be found in five feet of water or less. This makes for good shore fishing opportunities. You can watch for a river rise by monitoring flow. Telephone 1-800-242-1077 to find flow information for lower part of the Wisconsin River. If the flow is increasing at the Wisconsin Dells dam, water levels will likely rise in the river below the Sauk Dam in a day or two. The average flow through the Sauk Dam is 3-4000 CFS (cubic feet per second). High flow through the dam will cause a rise in the Lower Wisconsin River. Similar information for the Mississippi River can be gained from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ww2.mvr.usace.army.mil/NIC2/).

Water levels in the Lower Wisconsin River can fluctuate three or more feet in a single day. This contrasts to water levels in Lake Wisconsin, above the Sauk Dam, that are relatively stable.

Cold front conditions were another concern. Cold fronts don't seem to affect fishing as much in rivers as they do in lakes. If you think there is a problem with cold fronts in the river try fishing the steeper points or breaks, or in moving water.

The next question discussed lure colors to use in clear water versus dark water. The general answer was to use bright colors in stained water and dark colors in clear water, although Wally suggested using gold jig heads in clear water in the spring.



Wally

Another question discussed whether cloudy or clear days provided better fishing. It was generally agreed that low light periods were the best fishing, but that could be mitigated by water temperature. Often in the spring a good sunny day will warm water temperature, especially on south facing, shallow bays and around stumps, piers, or other debris. Warmer water temperatures in the spring start the fish feeding. In any event, time on the water pays dividends.

Food supply was also discussed. With the tough winters the last two years there has been a large die-off of giz-



Terry

Continued next page

zard shad in the Wisconsin and Mississippi Rivers. Gizzard shad are the primary forage in these systems. The panelists predict good fishing because the fish should be hungry. Sometimes when there is abundant forage, feeding is easy and fishing is tough. Remember it takes a lot of energy to be a river fish. They are fighting current so they need to feed every day.

About finding and catching walleyes- walleyes spawn at 42-45° F and they stage at different areas along the river so you don't need to fish just below the dam. Look for sand flats and shallow bays that warm more quickly in the spring - especially those along north shores. Also look for warm water inlets like feeder streams. When fishing below the dam target areas less than 12 feet deep for walleyes but over 20 feet deep for sauger. In water temperatures below 50° F a jig and minnow or a split-shot and minnow on a plain hook work best. Above 50° leeches, crawlers, and crankbaits are often the answer to catching walleyes. Terry Frye is a strong proponent of using 1/8 - 1/4 oz jigs and plastic ringworms for walleyes. This rig is long line trolled both ways of the current - preferably over sand flats in 12-14 feet of water. Slow trolling is a must, 1-1.5 m.p.h. If the fish won't bite plain ringworm, add the head or tail of a minnow. In the summer Terry likes to troll crankbaits amongst the stumps. Walleyes will often stack up in the channel above Lake Wisconsin in the fall.

For fishing walleyes in Lake Wisconsin, Gary and Wally like to start in the upper end of the lake or in the river above it in the spring. They start as far up as Hookers Resort; work down to Tipperary Point, then down the lake as spring and summer progress. Also look in the back of shallow bays. Wally's favorite lure to start the spring is a gold, 1/8 - 1/4 oz Slow Poke jig with a magnum fathead

minnow. Three-way rigs also work. Instead of using a bell sinker on the bottom of a three-way use a 1 oz jig and minnow. This gives you a "double dipping" opportunity with the jig on the bottom and a floating jig head or crankbait on the dropper.

Wally is the "Crappie King" of Lake Wisconsin. Start fishing crappies when the water temperature hits 50°. Look first in the backs of shallow bays on the north side of the lake. Use a Tru-Turn hook, baited with a minnow, 20 inches below a European style slip bobber. Cast it towards structure like piers and stumps that absorb heat and retrieve the rig slowly. A little later in the season start fishing the south side bays. Later yet start looking for green weeds and twitch tube jigs over the top. White or chartreuse, 1"-1.5" jigs are recommended. Still later in the season, when water temperatures are around 60°, the crappies will suspend. Trolling small crankbaits is recommended for catching these fish. Wally's favorite is a blue and white, #5, jointed Shad Rap with red hooks and a red belly. He probably has a few in stock at Wilderness Fish and Game in Sauk City. Wally targets water depths of 8'- 12' and starts out trolling 70' back with 10# X.T. monofilament line. The mouths of bays are a good place to start looking for fish. Wally is experimenting with using trolling boards with this set up. Crappies won't all suspend at the same depth so you may have to experiment with the line length to search for fish at different depth. As with any trolling application, vary your trolling speed and troll in S-shaped patterns.

White bass are another common fish in the Wisconsin and Mississippi River systems. One of the best ways to find them is to take a pair of binoculars

Continued next page

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River Fishing, continued

and watch for seagulls working the top of the water. Stay back and make long casts into the area using a Little George, a Road Runner, or a blade bait. A Gay Blade is good for jigging crappies and white bass.

Smallmouth bass fishing usually gets started around Memorial Day. Look for them in quiet areas like the backside of islands where fast water meets slow water. Wood along the shoreline is also a good place to look, as are rock flats and shell beds. The quiet areas on the backside of islands are good places to look for bluegills, crappies, perch, and largemouth bass – follow the foam lines.

Lastly are northern pike and muskies. Northern pike are not common in the Wisconsin River or Lake Wisconsin. Muskies are becoming more common. In Lake Wisconsin look for muskies near the islands below the grade. In the river look for them between the Sauk Dam and the Highway 12 bridge.

For more information and updates from Wally, Gary, and others tune in to Outdoor Horizons, WTDA, 1670 on your radio dial, at 8 A.M., Saturday mornings. Also check out Gary's website at www.garyengbergoutdoors.com.



Jim



Larry

Clements Barge Genoa - March 23

Larry Mothershead, Jim Kusuta, Terry Rogers and Jeff Western fished the Clements' Barge on the Mississippi in Genoa Monday, March 23. It was a good day of fishing with lots of fish caught....sauger, walleye, perch, carp, suckers, etc. Jim Kusuta caught a 25" Walleye and Larry Mothershead caught a 14" Perch.

Jeff Western

YFC scholarship awarded

February 2009

Jeff Western
Yahara Scholarship
PO Box 3271
Madison, WI 53704

Dear Jeff,

Thank you for your generous contribution that provides scholarship funds for well deserving students in the UW-Stevens Point College of Natural Resources (CNR). We've coupled the 2009 CNR Rendezvous Scholarship Awards Program with the CNR Student Research Symposium and Student Art and Photography Show. We hope you will be able to join us for these events.

Schedule of Events – Friday, April 3, 2009

- 10:00 – 4:00 p.m. – CNR Student Research Symposium and Student Art and Photography Show
Daniel O. Trainer Natural Resources Building
- 5:30 – 6:30 p.m. – Registration and hosted hors d'oeuvres
Courtyard of the Noel Fine Arts Center
UW-Stevens Point Campus
- 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. – CNR Rendezvous Scholarship Awards Program
Michelsen Hall
Noel Fine Arts Center

In preparation for presenting scholarships for spring 2009, we have screened applications for the Yahara Scholarship and selected Logan Bliss for your consideration. Please refer to the attached report for information on the candidate.

By **March 6, 2009** please return the enclosed response card to let us know whether you find Logan Bliss acceptable for your scholarship, and whether you or someone from your organization can attend the program to present the award. Unless we hear from you to the contrary by March 6, 2009 we will forward notification of the award to the student recipient.

If your donation is on an annual basis, please mail your check to UWSP Foundation, 2100 Main St. Suite 212, Stevens Point WI 54481 by April 1, 2008. Checks should be made payable to UWSP Foundation and please write 2207 in the memo line.

Thank you very much for your continued interest in the College and support of our students. I hope you can join us at the Noel Fine Arts Center to celebrate excellence on April 3, 2009.

Best regards,

Christine Thomas, Dean

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Tony Puccio, Wally Banfi

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Gary Engberg offered some advice at the Madison Fishing Expo and it worked out so well that I thought I would pass it on.

Gary said that I should fish the Sauk Dam now since walleyes and muskies were biting. I managed four evening trips during the first two weeks of March. I caught a total of 17 walleyes and one 32 inch musky. I had 10 walleyes that were between 18 and 21 inches and one 27 inch fish. These are pre-spawn fish so I elected to keep some of the legal fish but released quite a few including the 27 inch fish.

The method I used was to cast a number 7 Countdown Rapala colored gold and black. The lure was reeled slowly and the fish were in shallow water. The fish started biting at dark and I caught fish up to two hours from dark. I fished on the west side of the river and waded from a sandy beach area a few hundred yards below the dam. I believe that using a Rapala loop knot on a fluorocarbon leader is helpful to allow the lure to maintain a tight wiggle when reeled slowly. The conditions I encountered included low and clear water level for the first trip and high but clear water level for the fourth trip. During high water level I attempted unsuccessfully to fish closer to shore. When I returned to the same general area I fished during low water I began getting bites. This area was where the bottom started to drop from sand flat to deeper water.



By the time you read this the fishing may be over but hopefully some will try this next March.

Larry Mothershead

Fish Locator For Sale

Eagle Fish-Easy 320c fish locator like NEW condition used for two years did not use all of last year. In the latest Bass Pro Shop flyer the same locator 320 not the 320c like this one was on sale for 129.00 so at this price it is a good deal. Everything comes with it the transducer and the locator all for 140.00 .

Contact Jerry at 513-8573



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I didn't get a chance to write my column in the last newsletter and I want to thank everyone who helped at the Fishing Expo. What a great event and you people did an outstanding job. I especially want to thank Jim Pankratz for taking the responsibility for running all of the sign ups and running the booth and Eric Olson for assisting. The YFC made some positive strides at the Expo.

Just a reminder to everyone, April 13th is the Conservation Congress Meeting at Middleton High School. Participation by those who fish and hunt in the state of Wisconsin is very important. Wisconsin is one of only a few states that allow this type of input from the average Joe.

Thanks to Jesse Swing and Charlie Grimm for taking the responsibility for running the June and July "On The Water" meetings. Who wants to take responsibility for the August meeting? Let me know if you are interested. Jesse and Charlie will have the information details on these meetings on the website and in the newsletter.

Speaking of the newsletter. If you haven't looked at our website recently, take a look and see the changes that have taken place. Tom Raschke has done a great job and we will continue to make changes as time goes on. If you have an idea or comment on the website, please let Tom know and he will work on it (traschke@globaldialog.com).

Mark Sunday, June 7th on your calendar for our annual Kids Fishing Day. It will start at 11:00am and run through 3:00pm. You will need to get there by 9:00am to help get the 350 rod/reel combinations all set up. I know this is a different venue for this event and I am looking forward to finding out how it all works out. Rick Seeger, Paul Marunich, Tom Wilke and Jim Kloth are all helping me put this thing on. We need a high percentage of you to help that morning if we are to continue to run a quality event.

The Yahara Fishing Club Scholarship has been awarded to Logan Bliss from Cottage Grove. He is a double major in Biology and Fisheries and is on the UW-Stevens Point Fishing Team.

On this page are copies of two logos the Board has selected as our official YFC logo. We will be voting on which one to use at the April meeting. Remember, our meeting time has changed to 7:00pm. Once we decide on a logo, we will be ordering clothing and hats for the membership. We haven't done this in a while and it is a great way to spread the word about our club.

Outings, there should be some coming up. If you want to run an outing, please let me know and I will help you get started.

It really isn't a lot of work and I have enjoyed everyone that I have been able to participate in. This is a real selling point for our club, so lets get with it. I would also like to encourage all members who have a boat to share it with someone who doesn't own a boat. If you are a non-boater, please remember that anyone who takes you out in their boat is incurring an expense that you should offer to share.

Since the week before the Expo, I have been scrambling with all the irons I have in the fire. Things should be slowing down soon and maybe I can get out on the water. We had almost 165 people at the CCM Muskie School. If you fish muskies and you didn't come to this school – you missed the best one we ever had. See you next year.

I hope to see a lot of you on the water in the coming months.

Fishing Season Never Ends,
Duffy Kopf
YFC Prez



A



B

Muskies and Their Management in Southern Wisconsin

By Gary Engberg

This year, the Wisconsin open water fishing season opens a little earlier than in most years. The season always opens the first Saturday of May and this year that happens to fall on May 2nd. The muskie season in the state has two separate zones which are divided by Highway 10 into the Northern Zone where the muskie season opens May 23rd and the Southern Zone which opens on opening day, May 2nd.

If you are a die-hard muskie angler, why wait till the third week of May to go muskie fishing in northern Wisconsin? For decades, anglers have traveled to the northern Wisconsin Counties of Oneida, Vilas, Iron, and Sawyer for their muskie fishing. Now, there are numerous lakes in the Southern Zone of Wisconsin that have very good muskie numbers, give you three more weeks of fishing, and probably are closer to your home which saves some money in these troubled economic times.

Muskies are the state fish of Wisconsin since the 1950's and the state's Department of Natural Resources has made the fish one of major importance with a Muskellunge Management Team, many research projects, and a concentrated stocking program just to name a few of the state's fisheries priorities.

Muskie waters are divided into different classes and categories based upon size of fish, the quality of the fishing, and the reproductive status on its varied waters. Here are the different classifications for muskie waters; Class A is for the premier muskie fishing waters in the state with the best muskie fishing, Class A1 is trophy waters (356 lakes covering 217,364 acres) for large fish where numbers may be lower than other waters, Class A2 is classified as an "action" lake (104 lakes covering 118,173) with consistent angling, but less big fish, Class B is considered an intermediate lake with good fishing (222 waters covering 115,457 acres), but less prime water, and Class C waters (216 lakes covering 282,425 acres) have a muskie population that does not have a major impact on the total fishery of the lake. But, even Class C waters can have a fishable population and some big fish!

Muskie lakes are also divided into four categories based upon the reproductive status of the resident muskie population. Category 0 waters have a reproductive status which is unknown, Category 1 lakes have their muskie population totally sustained by natural reproduction, Category 2 lakes have natural reproduction while some receive stocking (364 lakes) and some don't (140 lakes), and Category 3 waters must have stocking to maintain their muskie populations (149 lakes). There is better fishing on lakes that have natural reproduction and little if any stocking. You have read other stories of mine about some of the stocking and research done on the Madison chain of lakes. The most recent articles talked about the stocking of the Leech lake strain of muskies from Minnesota and the Spooner Hatchery or Thompson strain of Wisconsin muskies that also have been stocked. The

DNR wants to see if there are any important and significant differences which would make one strain more successful in reproduction and in these times more economical.

One also must realize that 90% of the state's muskie waters are in the Northern Zone. Wisconsin manages muskies as a trophy fish and restricts the harvest through high length limits and low daily bag limits. The minimum size on many state waters is 34 inches, but many lakes and rivers have had higher length minimums made law with legal lengths anywhere from 40 to over 50 inches. Overall, natural reproduction is declining in most lakes and rivers which make stocking an important management strategy.

Another quick fact, there are 1.4 million people who fish in Wisconsin, 25% of the people fish muskies, and 5.3 million angler hours are spent fishing for muskies. There are 711 lakes covering 615,241 acres with muskies and 83 rivers covering 1,682 miles that contain the fish.

Needless to say, there are many waters with muskies in Wisconsin. You must decide if you want an action lake or a trophy lake? Then, do some research on the Wisconsin DNR website and investigate the many muskie waters before deciding the lakes that suit your wants and desires. I've compiled a list of muskie waters in the southern part of the state where you can start muskie fishing on Saturday, May 2nd, 2009.

Here are a list of muskie waters and their classifications by county. *(I only had room for Gary's Dane and Columbia county lakes. Editor)*

Columbia County; Lake Wisconsin, 9000 acres, Class C and Category 3, Swan Lake, 400 acres, Class C, and Category 3

Dane County; Lake Kegonsa, 3209 acres, Class C and Category 3, Lake Monona, 3274 acres, Class B, and Category 3, Lake Wabesa, 2080 acres, Class B, and Category 3, Lake Wingra, 345 acres, Class B, and Category 3, and Lake Koshkonnong, 10,460 acres, Class C, and Category 3.

I haven't talked about the many rivers that also have muskie populations well worth fishing. I live on the Wisconsin River that is blocked from Lake Wisconsin by the dam at Prairie du Sac, but the immediate area within a mile or two of the dam has a very good muskie population of very good size. In talking to the DNR fish managers, I've found that most of these muskies have come from Lake Wisconsin. They have managed to over the top of the dam during periods of high water during the spring. Few, if any of the fish have come up from the Mississippi River. There have been so many muskies caught this spring by walleye anglers than I can ever remember. I've always known that there were muskies in the river, but not in the numbers that I've seen this spring. Personally, I know of at least 40 muskies caught within the last month. I problem is that most of these fish are being caught accidentally by anglers

fishing for another species. This also happened last fall with sturgeon fishermen who again caught muskies by accident. One day near the end of the muskie season last November, I know of three out-of-state anglers who caught three muskies from 43 to 47 inches that were killed for food. The Sauk County Warden, John Buss, even offered the anglers money out of his own pocket if these guys would release the fish. They asked what the legal size minimum was and Buss replied 34 inches. The anglers turned down the "offer" and said they wanted to eat the fish. You must remember that a 40 inch muskie is 9 years old and a 50 inch fish is at least 17 years old! No muskie should be eaten or kept, please practice catch and release and if you catch a real trophy think about a graphite reproduction. This is my personal opinion, but please consider it when fishing for these magnificent predators. I'm in the process of trying to change the minimum size length on the Wisconsin River to 50 inches at this year's Spring DNR Hearings. The reason why muskies have flourished in this state and the Upper Midwest in the last 20 years is because of the anglers who release fish and the work of groups like Muskies, Inc. and concerted efforts by state's Department of Natural Resources who maintain populations of stocked fish.

You may not always have the scenery like you would in the northern Wisconsin Counties, but southern Wisconsin provides many memorable angling moments and why not take advantage of the early season before venturing north. Remember, CPR catch, photograph, and release. Good luck and always contact me and check out my website at gengberg@garyengbergoutdoors.com and check out the many photos of released muskies. You read my article about the Canadian, Dale MacNair, who possibly released a new world record on the St. Lawrence River. He told me that he thought about keeping the fish for only a second or two, before he released the 57" X 34" monster.

Information; Wisconsin DNR website, www.wi.dnr.gov/fish/musky.

State Staff Specialist, Tim Simonson, (608)-267-7498 or email at TimothySimonson@wisconsin.gov .

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10106 Hwy. Y Mazomanie, WI. 53560
Phone & Fax 608 795-4208
E-mail gengberg@chorus.net
Web site: <http://www.garyengbergoutdoors.com>

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The next meeting is on **Tuesday, April 14th**, at the Lakeside VFW Hall (John Nolen Rr. & Lakeside St.)
The Board Of Directors meet at 5:45 pm, The **General Membership meeting starts at 7:00 pm.**

Speaker: Stan Nichols. Trout fishing on southwestern Wisconsin streams with live bait and spinning tackle.

Calendar of Upcoming Events

April Events

April 13th - Conservation Congress Meeting at Middleton High School.
April 14th - Monthly meeting @7:00 pm, Lakeside VFW Hall. Trout fishing in SW Wisconsin.
April 16th - D&S Bait, 7:00 PM Ron Barefield Lake Wi. Crappies. Free
April 23th - D&S Bait, 7:00 PM Kurt Welke (DNR), Mendota Fish Population. Free
April 30th - D&S Bait, 7:00 PM Travis Richardson, Opening Weekend, Free

May Events

May 7th - D&S Bait, 7:00 PM, Mike Pecosky, Spring and Summer Walleyes. Free
May 12th - Monthly meeting @7:00 pm, Lakeside VFW Hall
May 14th - D&S Bait, 7:00 PM, Wally Banfi, Madison Chain Muskies. Free
May 21th - D&S Bait, 7:00 PM, Gary Engberg, Wi. River Summer Walleyes. Free

The Yahara Fishing Club's doors are open to **EVERYONE**, so invite a friend to the meeting!

President - Larry "Duffy" Kopf..849-7245
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www.yaharafishingclub.org



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